

Mr. Edward J. McCarter, Supervisory Archivist
Special Media Archives Services Division
National Archives at College Park
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001



Mr. Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Rd.
Frederick MD 21702-2752

11/3/01

Dear Mr. McCarter,

Thank you for your undated letter that enclosed two Zapruder frames. The letter itself requires some correction so that the record be accurate. You also made some assumptions that are not unreasonable but also are not accurate.

I work alone. I have no employees. There is nobody working for me.

You also referred to my publishing. Not in the usual sense. I claim for no commercial publication ^{but} by I have about three dozen books more than what I printed that are intended as a record for history.

I asked for two copies of the pictures so that one could remain in the file and one in the file copy of the book.

All the information I obtained under FOIA and most by far of my own ^{work} ~~own~~ ^{feel} are and for some time had been at the college in which there will be a public archive after all the necessary arrangements have been made. The books I printed went there about two years ago. That income goes to the college, not to me. I'd given it all my photographs and photographic equipment earlier. So, I am having th those two slides enlarged.

In your first paragraph you ^{say} ~~that~~ that I "believe" the prints you provided "are of poor quality." That ^{prizes} ~~prizes~~ those prints, which were trash, would have made me ashamed seventy-five years ago when as a boy I used a pinhole camera. If you can return them I'd like now to keep them on file.

I believe this is a much more serious matter than you reflect in what you have written me.

While it has been many years since my close study of the Zapruder film and my considerable writing about it, I have clear and dependable recollections about it. There is not a single frame ~~that~~ ^{none} that is as incomprehensible as those prints you sent me and ~~not~~ that had all the brightness of the colors eliminated. That film is evidence, evidence of a crime that is also a de facto coup d'etat, a crime that is of great significance in a country like ours and it is no simple accident or professional carelessness that could produce such an elimination of any ^{evidence} ~~evidence~~ in ^{these} ~~this~~ two prints. There may well

be more on this but if you are aware of all the allegations of criminal acts regarding that film you and others at the Archives should not have the attitude you reflect and should regard this and nuything like it with seriousness.

Your next paragraph discloses that I made a mistake and sent you a duplicate rather than the letter in which I asked for the slides instead of prints. There are several hints of this in the copies of my letters you did send me but I ^{at} have mailed you the duplicate instead of the specific request for copies of those slides. I apologize. But it should have been obvious to your people that if however they produced those prints turned out such photographic atrocities you did have clear photos they could duplicate and they neither did ~~that~~ that nor suggested it.

In your next paragraph you say that you are not sure ^{which} frames I want "because you seem unable to identify the exact frame numbers you hve seen in the past and we are still not sure that these are the slides you actually want." This is not true, not in any sense. It also is not the standard applicable to information requests unless the law has been rewritten since my extensive experience. Again I suggest that this attitude reflects seriously on the Archives.

The requirement of a request is that it be for "identifiable" information and after rereading my letters which you sent me I did do that in every way possible. I even identified the adjoining pictures and could not have been more specific in identifying what is ^{uniquely} in the frames I want. I was also specific in describing what preceded and what followed those two ^{one} frames and you ~~have~~ ^{well} not told me that the numbers I provided ~~was~~ ^{were} in any sense other than accurate.

With what I told the Archives about what those frames include, without the numbers the law required you to check those few frames and to send me those I described.

Whatever your information office says.

And the law does not regard the furnishing of gibberish as compliance, not when the original could not have been more clear.

Next you report that you do not normally make copies from the Time set, and I do thank you for that. You say this is because "the images we provided earlier were not of sufficient quality for" my use.

You also say elsewhere that you personally checked these pictures. If that is true I cannot possible believe that what I quote is any-

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thing like like real. What you provided could not have been used for anything at all. Most of what is portrayed cannot be made out, as you can see by checking the prints I returned to you. It was a bright, sunny day, as Zapruder captured, but no sun is visible on those prints. The grass~~y~~ was a bright ~~green~~ green but there is no green in those prints. And you had a wide variety of sources of good prints, including the copies that were made for the Exhibit 885 box and a number of decent prints of the 8mm film.

I do urge you to compare what you sent me with the many decent sources you had and to wonder what those who believed the ~~Archives~~ Archives was engaged in faking film to enable faking of the assassination can, legitimately, deduce from this ghastly example.

Next you say you have "exhausted" your resources and that you have fully met both the spirit and the letter of the provisions of the law." This is anything but true of the prints and I hope it is true of the slides, as I'll know when I can examine enlargements of them. If the copies are untouched it should be true and I certainly will appreciate it but with the rubbish you delivered in the prints how can I be certain that anybody altered anything else?

I am shocked, given the abysmal poorness of those prints, that you can say that "it appears that our past attempts to fulfill your requests have not pleased you." Who could that wretched business have pleased? Including you! And you say this after examining what we are talking about. Worse copies would not be easy to turn out. Reminds me of what I was told by an ~~Archives~~ ^{Archives} PHOTOGRAPHER WHO WAS ABOUT TO RETIRE WHEN HE GAVE ME A C PHOTOGRAPHER WHO WAS ABOUT TO RETIRE WHEN HE GAVE ME A C photographer was about to retire when he gave me a copy of the FBI's picture of the President's tie. It was an attractive tie with a clear and attractive pattern, as its use in Exhibit 60 to CD1 makes clear. (Reproduced in Post Mortem, page 597.) But as given to the Commission for it to use as an exhibit, the tie, basically brown with a white pattern, appears to be solid black. That retiring photographer ^{told} me that in order to turn out a picture like that the FBI had to use all its skills.

Not an unfair comment on what the Archives did in the prints it sent me.

What the FBI did was very much in Specter's interest, although not in his interest alone.

So ~~is~~ also is what the Archives did, ~~was~~ very much in Specter's

interest although, again, not in his special interest alone.

As we should see when we can examine those Zapruder slides.

This paragraph concludes, "So, we are making this final attempt to provide you with images 337 and 338 that are acceptable to you. Hopefully, they ~~are~~ will meet with your approval. Our photographic lab has done the best that it can."

This makes it seem like something special was required of the Archives photo lab. Nothing more was required of it than is required of the cheapest photo reproduction such as is provided by chain stores offering one hour delivery.

If the ~~Archib~~ Archives had begun with a clear slide and if there had been no shanky-panky the automatic result should have been an acceptable copy. The second-generation copy I examined in early 1967 or late 1966 was, despite what you say to make it seem less clear and less important that it was and is, should have been, automatically, fine. Reproducing clear pictures is no big deal-if the intention is normal, honest reproduction of them.

Thank you for the caution on the copyright but I intend no violation of the copyright.

An earlier letter, also undated, displays ignorance of the correspondence, of the Zapruder film and of the subject matter that is so exceptionally important in the nation's history, a determined ignorance that is not consistent with the function of "Supervising Archivist - Still Pictures Special Media Archives Services Division," your job title. With the subject matter the most famous of motion pictures, that the appropriate expert was not consulted does seem a bit abnormal.

In full, this letter is:



College Park, Maryland 20740-60

Harold Weisberg
7627 Old Receiver Rd.
Frederick, MD 21702

Dear Mr. Weisberg:

I received your letter of 7/23 indicating that frames 337 and 338, that you asked for in your original letter, do not appear to be the ones you actually want. At this point, it is not clear to me which frames you are interested in. I do not know which 9 frames were withheld from Exhibit 885. If you can tell me frame numbers of those withheld, I will take a look at them. I did look at all the slides, and there seems to me to be two different segments that might relate to what you are interested in. I am not an expert on the JFK assassination, but in looking at the frames it appears to me that frames 243-312 and 314-338 may contain the images that you want. Both segments are before and after frame 313, which graphically depicts the President being struck in the head by a bullet. The segment that looks most like what you describe in your letter as "The frames I want are those that show the back of his head as he is falling rapidly to his left and onto his wife", appear to be frames 314-338. Unfortunately, most of the images in frames 314-338 are pretty fuzzy and not clear at all.

Rather than continue to try to select slides that may address your interest, I am hoping that you, or someone working for you, could visit our College Park research room. We will help you identify the exact frames you are looking for, and will be glad to make the reproductions you request. I think this would be the best way to proceed, in order for you to get exactly what you want. If you would like to set up a research visit, you can either write to me, or call me (301-713-6625, X258) to do so. I will be going on vacation next week, August 6-10, but will return the following week.

Edward J. McCarter
Supervisory Archivist - Still Pictures
Special Media Archives Services Division

Full Copy

Although in ^{this} ~~which~~ you quote my description of what I referred to as unique in the entire film you avoid mention of that, which should have told you that what you quote is exactly what I said in unique in the film, limited to two frames, and what I want:

"The segment that looks most like what you describe in your letter as 'The frames that I want are those that show the back of his head as he is falling rapidly to his left onto his wife,' appear to be frames ~~30~~ 314-338. Unfortunately, most of the images in frames 314-338 are pretty fuzzy and not clear at all."

Most of this was entirely unnecessary from what I had informed the Archives, that the two frames of interest came after the fatal shot and were the two frames after the reproduction of those frames ended improperly. After frame 334, or frames 337 and 338. A check of those two frames and of those two frames only would have avoided the waste of time and increased confusion. Moreover, each of the President's motions, which I did specify, ^{were} ~~was~~ unique in that film. There was no need in dividing the film into segments because the initial information specified two frames only, hardly a "segment" when of a ninth of a second only, unless you complicated things deliberately.

Even if you ignored all the specific detail I provided and had gotten the box of those slides and begin with frame 335, the first of the nine I told you had been suppressed, you'd have found that the third of those suppressed frames met the description I provided and that would have taken little more than a second..

It is not easy to understand how a professional would have wasted so much time and ignored such detailed and accurate instructions.

And on finding exactly what I had described fudging ^{ed} ~~ing~~ around with that and then adding what is not true of what there is in that part of the Zapruder film that is, in terms of its possible usefulness in the assassination, "pretty fuzzy and not clear at all." That is certainly not true of what was of special interest to me, as we'll see when we get the enlargement of those frames.

You also returned to me my July 6 letter to Martha Wagner Murphy, Archivist, Special Access and FOIA staff. First I explained to her that even after so many years my recollection of those two frames is that "they were particularly clear and bright, very bright, and held a very clear view of what I'd not seen before..." I explain so that you can be certain that my recollection of the

frame numbers is correct..."

Then I described those few frames of the Zapruder film, in detail.

Then I described the unique content and that "they were very bright and very clear after great magnification"...

I then told her, and you had this correspondence, that "When all of this and more is clearly and brightly visible on 35mm slides ~~when~~ projected ^{ion} I do not understand why in the prints I return herewith there is no clarity, no brightness and what was so clearly visible on projection is not visible at all..."

Then is one of the times I said I'd be satisfied by the slide.

Which will be true if they are as they were when I first examined them. And which from your letters I fear they are not,

My recollection of what is unique in those slides is sharp and to the best of my knowledge is unique. If it is not clearly visible now that means that the film was altered and that would be a major scandal, particularly because the supposed investigation was of the assassination of a President.

Remember, too, that those slides were made by professionals and from the original of the film, the film that was so clear that even when converted to black and white and then printed was clear enough to disprove some official interpretations of it. And that, I would hope, was enough film scandal for the government.

In this case the scandal would be limited to the Archives, the scandal I sincerely hope does not exist. What I saw was when the film was in the possession of the Archives and several years after the Commission's publication was completed and its life ended.

There can, of course, be different meanings to such words as bright and clear but please believe me, my recollection of those frames is accurate and dependable and what grabbed my attention is starkly visible in those two frames.

I hope that when I get the enlargements from the photographer what interested me is still quite visible.

From what you say I fear it is not and if it is not then we have still another major scandal when ^a President was assassinated and ^{that} was supposedly investigated by the government made government by that assassination. But if I as I hope those frames are useful, I thank you for them.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg
Harold Weisberg

Please excuse the appearance of this letter.

I'm not well and alas, it cannot be any better.